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The Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) broke ground this morning on a \$15 million stimulus project to widen Interstate 55 between Routes M and Z in Jefferson County. All lanes of northbound I-55 between Routes M and Z will be closed from 8 p.m. Friday until 5 a.m. Saturday, weather permitting, so crews can begin work to remove a bridge over Route M.

The I-55 widening project is being funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. The project will add one lane to the interstate between Routes M and Z, in Jefferson County, and will improve safety and ease congestion, the state agency said.

MoDOT awarded the widening project to Millstone Bangert Inc., one of St. Louis' largest privately held companies, in January.

I-55 is an eight-lane roadway in Jefferson County from the Meramec River to Route M, where it then shrinks to four lanes.

Two bridges on I-55, over Route M and Glaize Creek, also will be replaced as part of the \$15 million project.

The shutdown overnight Friday will allow crews to remove the left shoulder and lane of the I-55 bridge over Route M. Northbound motorists will be detoured to U.S. Rout 61/67 and back to Route M until I-55 northbound reopens Saturday morning.

Once reopened, northbound I-55 between Routes M and Z will have lanes reduced to 11 feet side, with concrete barriers on both sides.

The widening project also calls for straightening the I-55 southbound exit to Route M.

U.S. Rep. Russ Carnahan, a Democrat from Missouri's 3rd District, attended a groundbreaking for the project Friday at a Barnhart commuter lot. The I-55 widening project will create more than 500 jobs, directly and indirectly, he said in a statement.

Carnahan is on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

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